

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 175 618

RC 011 613

AUTHOR Eileti, Dennis S.; And Others
TITLE Resident Perceptions in Growth-Impacted Western Agricultural Communities.
INSTITUTION Colorado State Univ., Ft. Collins.
PUB DATE 23 Aug 79
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society (Burlington, Vermont, August 23-26, 1979); Contributes to Project W-118 of the Colorado State University Experiment Station

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Agriculture; Community Attitudes; *Community Change; Community Leaders; Community Satisfaction; *Community Services; Demography; Differences; *Perception; Questionnaires; Rural Farm Residents; Rural Nonfarm Residents; *Rural Population; *Urban to Rural Migration
IDENTIFIERS Colorado; *Impact Studies; Long Term Residents

ABSTRACT

A study of community satisfaction in two eastern Colorado towns found that residents' perceptions of their communities were significantly related to demographic and residential/migrational characteristics. Questionnaires were sent to 450 telephone subscribers, selected randomly from the 1977 directories for both communities: 49% were completed and returned. The demographic and residential characteristics obtained were age, education of head-of-household, income, length of residence in the community, place of birth, and residence in or beyond the city limits. Twelve statements, with which the respondents agreed or disagreed, tapped community satisfaction, i.e., sense of community and perceptions of community change, leadership, and services. Statistically significant relationships were determined with Chi-Square and Cramer's V or Phi. Recent in-migrants, people of lower socio-economic status, and out-of-town residents perceived fewer problems with all phases of their community than did longer term residents, people of higher socio-economic status, and in-town residents. Of the three demographic factors, only education was related to perceptions of community leadership and unrelated to perceptions of community services: as education increased, satisfaction with community decreased. (JH)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED175618



RESIDENT PERCEPTIONS IN GROWTH-IMPACTED
WESTERN AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITIES*

Dennis S. Milet
Frank A. Santopolo
Gary Williams

Colorado State University

Paper to be presented at the Annual Meetings of the Rural Sociological Society, August 23-24, 1979, Burlington, Vermont.

*This work was supported as part of Project W-118, Colorado State University Experiment Station, Department of Sociology, Fort Collins, Colorado 80523. We wish to express our appreciation to William Hanna and Craig Piernot for their able research assistance with this effort.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Dennis
Milet

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

RC 011613

RESIDENT PERCEPTIONS IN GROWTH-IMPACTED WESTERN AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Rural and non-urban communities in most western states, as well as in other regions of the U.S., have recently experienced increases in population. This trend toward growth in these non-urban western communities is a recent shift from long-standing trends of population loss in such communities (Beale, 1975). There is no evidence that this growth will slow down in the foreseeable future. Such growth is likely attributable to a variety of reasons, including energy development, advances in irrigation, and the desires of some urbanites to return to a non-urban way of life. It is no surprise that such growth precipitates local community problems, and alters levels of community satisfaction with services, leadership, sense of community, and change (W118, 1978).

In this paper we examine community perceptions of these areas in two agricultural Colorado communities located in the eastern plains of the state. Three questions are answered: (1) what is the effect of standard demographic characteristics on community perceptions, (2) what is the effect of residential/migrational characteristics on community perceptions, and (3) which set of independent factors contributes the most to our ability to explain differences in community perceptions. Demographic characteristics, as well as residential/migrational characteristics, are appraised for their relative ability to explain community perceptions.

Deseran (1978) warns of the pitfalls of using the concept of community satisfaction as an analytical tool; however we must agree with Marans and Rodgers (1975) that an individual's satisfaction with any set of circumstances is dependent on a whole set of values, attitudes, and expectations that he brings into a situation. Several authors, including Deseran (1975), apparently agree that research using community satisfaction is an area of study which may help to resolve the subjective-objective dilemma (Rojeck et al, 1975; Marans and Rodgers, 1975; Campbell et al, 1976). Recently, social scientists in the western region of the U.S. stated that the impacts of migration on social systems "also involve subjective feelings and voluntary responses of affected individuals" (W118, 1978). The same event may be judged a social benefit or cost,

depending upon the perceptions of people. Moreover, personal characteristics can also influence an assessment of the physical or social environment, or of components of those environments (Marans and Rodgers, 1975). Although there is some question concerning the reliability of current measures of community satisfaction (Deseran, 1978; Marans and Rodgers, 1975), we believe that the concept can be helpful in the formulation of social policy, and that it is important to report its usefulness as a research tool whenever possible. To this end, we offer an analysis of residents' perceptions of two rural growth-impacted communities in Colorado.

METHOD

Sample

This study was conducted on two rural Colorado communities in the agricultural eastern plains of the state. Both communities have been recently impacted by rapid growth because of conversion from dry-land to irrigated farming. The first community, Burlington, converted to irrigation some half-dozen years ago, while the second, Yuma, converted more recently.

A mailed questionnaire was sent to a random sample of telephone subscribers listed in the 1977 Mountain Bell directories for both communities. Residents with unlisted telephone numbers, without telephones, or those who arrived in the area since the directory was published were not included in the study carried out in January of 1978. Some 450 questionnaires were mailed; those completed and returned represent a response rate of 49 percent.

Measures and Analysis

The measures employed to operationalize the demographic and residential variables used in this study follow. Age was measured and coded as under 21, 21-31, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, and 61 or older. Education of the head-of-household was cast as less than high school graduation, high school graduate, some college or trade school beyond high school, and college graduation. Income was taken as the combined income of both the head-of-household and his/her spouse before taxes, and coded as under \$5,000; \$5,001 to \$10,000;

\$10,001 to \$15,000; \$15,001 to \$20,000; \$20,001 to \$25,000; \$25,001 to \$30,000; \$30,001 to \$35,000; \$35,001 to \$40,000; and over \$40,000. Length of residence in the community was coded in years and divided into the following categories: 0-5; 6-10; 11-15; 16-20; 21-30; 31-40; 41-50; and 51 or more. Nativity was taken as yes or no in response to the question of "were you born in or near this community?" Whether respondents lived in town or beyond the edge of town was coded as 1 and 2, respectively. Codes for all variables were collapsed if necessary to enable analysis of the data.

Dependent variables were coded as 1 for agree, and 2 for disagree or not sure, in reference to twelve statements. There were, for perceived community change: (1) this community is too crowded, (2) this community is changing too fast, (3) too many people are moving to this community; for perceived community leadership: (4) local leaders do a good job of handling problems, (5) local government does a good job of providing and maintaining services, (6) local leaders do a good job of expending public funds wisely; for perceived community services: (7) there are too few good places to shop here, (8) existing community facilities can handle this town's growth, (9) this community needs more health services; and for sense of community: (10) this community has an identity all its own, (11) people here are too conservative, and (12) most people here are pretty much alike.

Relationships were assessed for statistical significance with Chi-Square and Cramer's V or Phi, depending upon the size of the particular table, for strength.

FINDINGS

Perceived Community Change

The data presented in Tables 1 and 2, respectively, illustrate the findings in reference to the effect of demographic and residential factors on perceived community change. These findings suggest that all three demographic character-

(Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here)

istics, examined, and two residential characteristics, were significantly and positively related to perceptions of too much and too rapid community change.

Age, education, income, nativity, and in-town vs. out-of-town residence were all positively and consistently related to negative perceptions of change in the local community.

Perceived Community Leadership

The data presented in Tables 3 and 4 illustrate a relatively straightforward set of findings concerning the effects of demographic versus

(Insert Tables 3 and 4 about here)

residential characteristics on perceived community leadership. Only one demographic characteristic, education, remained significantly related to perceived community leadership for both zero-order and partial correlations. The higher the level of education, the less likely a person is to feel that community leadership is being practiced soundly. This was the case for all three dimensions of leadership assessed: handling problems, expending public funds and providing/maintaining services. On the other hand, two residential characteristics assessed held some significant relationship to perceived leadership at both zero-order and partial levels. First, length of residence was consistently and positively related to perceptions of sound leadership. Second, nativity was consistently but negatively related to perceptions of sound leadership.

It appears that the native born, new in-migrants, and the highly educated perceive problems in the ability of local leaders to manage community affairs and problems, but that this is not the case for in-migrants of moderate or low education as they spend more and more time in the local community.

Perceptions of Community Services

Only one of the three demographic factors, education, was related to perceptions of community leadership. Interestingly, only education was not significantly related to perceptions of community services. Tables 5 and 6 present the findings when both demographic and residential characteristics were, respectively, assessed for effects on perceptions of community services.

(Insert Tables 5 and 6 about here)

Age was consistently and significantly related in a curvilinear fashion to

perceived inadequate service facilities. The middle-aged perceived this as a problem, whereas the young and old were more likely to be satisfied with existing facilities. Income, on the other hand, was inversely related to all dimensions of services that were assessed. It seems that the affluent were dissatisfied with shopping facilities, pessimistic about the ability of current services to handle growth, and less likely to perceive a need for improving local health care services, perhaps because they can well afford to obtain good health within the existing system of constraints.

At the same time (see Table 6), residential factors had an influence on perceived community services. As was the case in reference to perceptions of local leadership, natives were more pessimistic about local services than in-migrants. Natives were more likely to perceive the need for more shopping facilities and health services, and more likely to doubt the ability of local services to handle growth than were in-migrants. At the same time, length of residence for in-migrants was significantly related to the perceptions of inadequate community services. As the length of residence in the local community increased, the more likely were people to perceive inadequacies in local services. Area of residence, in or out of town, was also related to perceptions of services. In essence, people who lived in town were more likely to see inadequacies in the services provided by the community.

Perceived Sense of Community

Tables 7 and 8 present the findings of, respectively, demographic and residential factors on perceived sense of community. The findings that emerged

(Insert Tables 7 and 8 about here)

are interesting. Age and income were not related to sense of community; however, education was significantly related even while controlling for the influence of residence. As education increased, the likelihood of perceiving a low sense of community, too conservative a citizenry, and high diversity among residents all increased. This suggests that education was inversely related to perceived sense of community. At the same time, all three residential factors were related to sense of community. In essence, new migrants held higher levels of sense of community than did natives or in-migrants who

had been in the community for a long time. At the same time, people who lived in town held less identity than residents of the community who lived beyond the edge of town.

CONCLUSIONS

Socio-economic status was positively related to perceptions of too much local change, problems in local leaderships, inadequacies in service, and a lack of a sense of community. Age was positively related to perceptions of too much local change, and curvilinearly related to inadequacies in services, and a lack of a sense of community. Length of residence was negatively related to perceptions of perceived problems in local leadership, inadequacies in local services, and a lack of a sense of community. In-town versus out-of-town residence was positively related to perceptions of too much local change, inadequacies in local services, and a lack of a sense of community.

In conclusion, it appears that new in-migrants perceive less and fewer problems with their community than do older in-migrants or old timers, as do people of lower socio-economic status and out-of-town residents. At the same time, longer-term residents, higher socio-economic status persons, and people who live in town perceive greater problems in all aspects of their community.

REFERENCES

- Beale, Calvin L.
1975 The Revival of Population Growth in Nonmetropolitan America. Washington, D.C.: USDA Economic Research Service, ERS-605.
- Campbell, Angus, P.E. Converse, and W.L. Rodgers
1976 The Quality of American Life: Perceptions, Evaluations, and Satisfaction. New York: Russell Sage Foundations.
- Deseran, Forrest A.
1978 "Community satisfaction as definition of the situation: Some conceptual issues." Rural Sociology, Vol. 43, 235-249.
- Marans, Robert W., and Willard Rodgers
1975 "Toward an understanding of community satisfaction." Pp. 299-352 in A.H. Hawley and V.P. Rock (eds), Metropolitan America in Contemporary Perspective. New York: John Wiley.
- Rojeck, Dean G., Frank Clemente, and Gene Summers
1975 "Community satisfaction: A study of contentment with local services." Rural Sociology. 40: 177-92.
- Western Regional Research Project W-118
1978 The Economic and Social Significance of Human Migration for the Western Region. Pullman: College of Agriculture Research Center, Washington State University, October 1978.

Table 1
EFFECT OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS
ON PERCEIVED COMMUNITY CHANGE*

INDEPENDENT	DEPENDENT	ZERO-ORDER CORRELATIONS	SIGNIFICANCE WHILE CONTROLLING FOR		
			X ₄	X ₅	X ₆
X ₁	Y ₁	.30	N/S	N/S	N/S
	Y ₂	.24	N/S	N/S	N/S
	Y ₃	.37	N/S	N/S	N/S
X ₂	Y ₁	.27	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₂	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S
	Y ₃	.28	yes	yes	yes
X ₃	Y ₁	.26	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₂	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S
	Y ₃	.32	yes	yes	yes

*Where X₁ = age, X₂ = education, X₃ = income, X₄ = length of residence, X₅ = nativity, X₆ = live in town or beyond edge, Y₁ = community too crowded, Y₂ = community changing too fast, Y₃ = too many people moving to community. All relationships specified were significant at the .05 level or better.

Table 2
EFFECT OF RESIDENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS
ON PERCEIVED COMMUNITY CHANGE*

INDEPENDENT	DEPENDENT	ZERO-ORDER CORRELATIONS	SIGNIFICANCE WHILE CONTROLLING FOR		
			X 1	X 2	X 3
X ₄	Y ₁	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S
	Y ₂	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S
	Y ₃	-.25	N/S	yes	yes
X ₅	Y ₁	.21	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₂	.20	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₃	.28	yes	yes	yes
X ₆	Y ₁	.24	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₂	.16	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₃	.26	yes	yes	yes

*Where X₁ = age, X₂ = education, X₃ = income, X₄ = length of residence, X₅ = nativity, X₆ = live in town or beyond edge, Y₁ = community too crowded, Y₂ = community changing too fast, Y₃ = too many people moving to community. All relationships specified were significant at the .05 level or better.

Table 3
EFFECT OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS
ON PERCEIVED COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP*

INDEPENDENT	DEPENDENT	ZERO-ORDER CORRELATIONS	SIGNIFICANCE WHILE CONTROLLING FOR		
			X ₄	X ₅	X ₆
X ₁	Y ₄	.22	N/S	yes	yes
	Y ₅	.19	N/S	yes	yes
	Y ₆	.29	N/S	yes	yes
X ₂	Y ₄	-.24	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₅	-.28	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₆	-.22	yes	yes	yes
X ₃	Y ₄	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S
	Y ₅	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S
	Y ₆	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S

*Where: X₁ = age, X₂ = education, X₃ = income, X₄ = length of residence, X₅ = nativity, X₆ = live in town or beyond edge, Y₄ = local leaders do good job of handling problems, Y₅ = local government does good job of providing-maintaining services, Y₆ = public funds used wisely. All relationships specified were significant at the .05 level or better.

Table 4
EFFECT OF RESIDENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS
ON PERCEIVED COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP*

INDEPENDENT	DEPENDENT	ZERO-ORDER CORRELATIONS	SIGNIFICANCE WHILE CONTROLLING FOR		
			X ₁	X ₂	X ₃
X ₄	Y ₄	.23	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₅	.24	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₆	.30	yes	yes	yes
X ₅	Y ₄	-.17	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₅	-.20	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₆	-.17	yes	yes	yes
X ₆	Y ₄	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S
	Y ₅	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S
	Y ₆	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S

*Where X₁ = age, X₂ = education, X₃ = income, X₄ = length of residence, X₅ = nativity, X₆ = live in town or beyond edge, Y₄ = local leaders do good job of handling problems, Y₅ = local government does good job of providing-maintaining services, Y₆ = public funds used wisely. All relationships specified were significant at the .05 level or better.

Table 5
EFFECT OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS
ON PERCEIVED COMMUNITY SERVICES*

INDEPENDENT	DEPENDENT	ZERO-ORDER CORRELATIONS	SIGNIFICANCE WHILE CONTROLLING FOR		
			X ₄	X ₅	X ₆
X ₁	Y ₇	-.23	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₈	-.26	N/S	N/S	N/S
	Y ₉	-.34	N/S	N/S	N/S
X ₂	Y ₇	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S
	Y ₈	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S
	Y ₉	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S
X ₃	Y ₇	-.28	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₈	-.22	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₉	-.27	yes	yes	yes

*Where X₁ = age, X₂ = education, X₃ = income, X₄ = length of residence, X₅ = nativity, X₆ = live in town or beyond edge, Y₇ = too few good places to shop, Y₈ = community facilities can handle growth, Y₉ = community needs more health services. All relationships specified were significant at the .05 level or better.

Table 6
EFFECT OF RESIDENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS
ON PERCEIVED COMMUNITY SERVICES*

INDEPENDENT	DEPENDENT	ZERO-ORDER CORRELATIONS	SIGNIFICANCE WHILE CONTROLLING FOR		
			X ₁	X ₂	X ₃
X ₄	Y ₇	.24	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₈	-.34	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₉	.23	yes	yes	yes
X ₅	Y ₇	-.19	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₈	-.25	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₉	.19	yes	yes	yes
X ₆	Y ₇	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S
	Y ₈	.15	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₉	-.24	yes	yes	yes

*Where X₁ = age, X₂ = education, X₃ = income, X₄ = length of residence, X₅ = nativity, X₆ = live in town or beyond edge, Y₇ = too few good places to shop, Y₈ = community facilities can handle growth, Y₉ = community needs more health services. All relationships specified were significant at the .05 level or better.

Table 7
EFFECT OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS
ON PERCEIVED SENSE OF COMMUNITY*

INDEPENDENT	DEPENDENT	ZERO-ORDER CORRELATIONS	SIGNIFICANCE WHILE CONTROLLING FOR		
			X ₄	X ₅	X ₆
X ₁	Y ₁₀	.22	N/S	yes	N/S
	Y ₁₁	-.22	N/S	yes	yes
	Y ₁₂	-.25	N/S	N/S	N/S
X ₂	Y ₁₀	-.27	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₁₁	.22	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₁₂	-.22	yes	yes	yes
X ₃	Y ₁₀	.30	N/S	yes	yes
	Y ₁₁	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S
	Y ₁₂	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S

*Where X₁ = age, X₂ = education, X₃ = income, X₄ = length of residence, X₅ = nativity, X₆ = live in town or beyond edge, Y₁₀ = this community has an identity all its own, Y₁₁ = people here are too conservative, Y₁₂ = most people here are pretty much alike. All relationships specified were significant at the .05 level or better.

Table 8
EFFECT OF RESIDENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS
ON PERCEIVED SENSE OF COMMUNITY*

INDEPENDENT	DEPENDENT	ZERO-ORDER CORRELATIONS	SIGNIFICANCE WHILE CONTROLLING FOR		
			X ₁	X ₂	X ₃
X ₄	Y ₁₀	-.26	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₁₁	-.20	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₁₂	-.23	yes	yes	yes
X ₅	Y ₁₀	-.27	yes	yes	yes
	Y ₁₁	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S
	Y ₁₂	-.18	yes	yes	yes
X ₆	Y ₁₀	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S
	Y ₁₁	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S
	Y ₁₂	-.16	yes	yes	yes

*Where X₁ = age, X₂ = education, X₃ = income, X₄ = length of residence, X₅ = nativity, X₆ = live in town or beyond edge, Y₁₀ = this community has an identity all its own, Y₁₁ = people here are too conservative, Y₁₂ = most people here are pretty much alike. All relationships specified were significant at the .05 level or better.